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No. 13

Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 22, 2000, at 11 a.m.

House of Representatives

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2000

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PEASE).

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DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 14, 2000.

I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD A. PEASE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

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MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1287. An act to provide for the storage of spent nuclear fuel pending completion of the nuclear waste repository, and for other purposes.

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MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 19, 1999, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to but not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the mi-

nority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

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PASSAGE OF THE MARRIAGE TAX ELIMINATION ACT, A GREAT VALENTINE'S DAY PRESENT

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, of course today is known as Valentine's Day. It is a great day for those who care for one another. It is a day of the heart. This past week we had some important action in this House of Representatives which affect 28 million married working couples who because of their heart pay higher taxes.

The American people have often told me that they are frustrated; they think it is unfair that 21 million married working couples on average pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married.

That really is a fundamental question. Is it right, is it fair, that under our Tax Code, 25 million married working couples on average pay \$1,400 more?

Now, I represent the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs in Illinois, and folks back home they tell me that \$1,400 is a year's tuition for a nursing student at a community college in Illinois; it is a washer and a dryer; it is several months' worth of car payments; it is 3 months of day care, but it is higher taxes, money that is taken from married couples, just because they are married.

That is wrong. Of course, Valentine's Day is today and today is the day that

we can celebrate the fact that the House passed H.R. 6, legislation wiping out the marriage tax penalty for 25 million married working couples. Let me explain how the marriage tax penalty works.

If one is single, of course, they file as a single person; but when they get married, they file jointly. They combine their incomes. The way our Tax Code works is if a couple is a machinist and a schoolteacher with identical incomes, say a machinist makes \$31,000, if he stays single he pays in the 15 percent tax bracket; but if he meets and marries a public school teacher with an identical income of \$31,000, their \$62,000 combined income pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket. They pay the average tax penalty of almost \$1,400 just because they got married.

Right now the Tax Code discourages marriage by punishing it with financial penalties. That is wrong.

This past week, the House passed H.R. 6, and I want to commend the leadership of the House, Speaker DENNIS HASTERT, for moving a stand-alone, clean, marriage tax elimination legislation.

There is no other extraneous provisions. There are no excuses like the President used last year when he vetoed our effort to wipe out the marriage tax penalty. We deal with one issue, that is, wiping out the marriage tax penalty for 25 million married working couples.

I would point out that H.R. 6 helps married couples in a number of ways. If one looks at who pays the marriage tax penalty, one half of married couples

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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itemize their taxes because they own a home or give money to church or synagogue or charity or have education expenses. The other half do not. So we help both in the legislation that we passed. We double the standard deduction for those who do not itemize for joint filers to twice that of singles and for those who do itemize, and of course most middle-class families own their home so they are required to itemize their taxes. So we help them by widening the 15 percent bracket so that joint filers can earn twice as much in the 15 percent bracket as a single filer. It is fair that way.

We also help, I would point out, the working poor with addressing the marriage penalty that is in the eligibility for joint filers for married couples for the earned income credit to help the working poor. So we double the standard deduction. We widen the 15 percent bracket. We address the earned income credit marriage penalty, and we help 25 million married working couples by being fair.

It is time that we make the Tax Code fair. It is time that we make the Tax Code marriage neutral so that one is not punished when they get married. Of course, I am proud our proposal does not raise taxes on anyone else in order to wipe out the marriage tax penalty.

So two single people, two married people, no one pays more taxes than the other. It is the fair way to do it; and I am proud that 268 Members of this House, every Republican and fortunately 48 Democrats, broke from their leadership and supported our effort to wipe out the marriage tax penalty. That is progress, tremendous momentum. An overwhelming majority of the House supported our effort to wipe out the marriage tax penalty, an issue of fairness for 25 million married working couples.

I am concerned, though. I have been told that there are some in the Senate who want to load up the marriage tax elimination effort. They want to put poison pills, and they want to put other extraneous provisions on this bill. My hope is we can avoid that. My hope is that we can convince the Senate to keep it a stand-alone, clean, marriage tax elimination bill. That is the best approach. That way it is fair. There are no excuses for the President to veto it this time. He said during the State of the Union that he thought we should address the marriage tax penalty. We want the President to keep his word. We want to give the President the opportunity to do that by sending him a stand-alone bill.

There is no need for partisan politics. We had a bipartisan vote when this legislation passed the House this past week; and what better gift to give 25 million married working couples on this Valentine's Day than enactment into law the Marriage Tax Penalty Act.

THE STRUGGLE TO MANAGE GROWTH PROPERLY IS A KEY CONCERN FOR ALL AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in 5 short minutes, when I sit down, there will be 6 more Californians. Twenty-four hours from now, 1,700 people will either be born or move to the Golden State. This continued relentless growth, coupled with patterns of unplanned development, congestion, pollution, and the loss of open space has created a backlash in our Golden State. The front page of the Sunday New York Times yesterday contained a dramatic example of the controversy surrounding a huge development, the Newhall Ranch in the Los Angeles area, and what it represents for their community.

The struggle to manage growth properly is a key concern for all Americans, but the implications for California are critical. Just as families across America watched on Disneyland the progress on the Walt Disney Show every Sunday night for weeks during the mid-1950s, America has been watching the struggle to manage developed area in our Nation's largest State.

In the Los Angeles area alone, from 1970 to 1990, the developed area tripled to encompass an area the size of the State of Connecticut, growing six times faster than the growth in population.

This explosive growth is not just limited to Southern California. It has created a crisis in livability in the Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and the Central Valley, home to America's most precious farmland, arguably. Fresno County produces more agricultural product than 24 States combined. Yet, if the projections to triple its population with the current land uses are realized, there will be a million acres of farmland lost.

Since 90 percent of all of California's agricultural output is near the urban fringe, this has critical implications all across the State.

California has many examples of smart growth initiatives led by individuals like State Treasurer Phil Angelinas and his insightful report detailing how California State government can invest in smart growth. There are communities that have taken in their own hands to establish limits on urban growth and protect their natural resources through local initiatives.

The Silicon Valley Manufacturers Association for years has identified as the top priority for this business group affordable housing, protection of open space and transportation.

The wildly successful and popular Coastal Zone Management Program is an example of sound land-use planning in the State of California, but what the

State does not have is a statewide framework that would assure that every local government does its job and that nobody can grow at the expense of their neighbors.

It is time that the voters or the State legislature provide the same thoughtful framework for the rest of the State. Californians should also insist that Congress not stand idly by as they struggle to maintain the livability of their State.

Candidly, many of Congress' well-intended programs in the past, from massive water projects to the interstate freeway system, have fueled California's explosive growth and some of the problems. There are simple steps that we can take here in Congress. We should require that the substantial sums of Federal money for infrastructure and water projects, road transit, should be spent only after careful planning and analysis to protect community resources and the environment.

The Federal Government should increase its investment in brownfield cleanup through subsidy low-interest loans and tax incentives and continue efforts to reform the brownfield and Superfund cleanup process.

The Federal Government should reform the flood insurance program, passing a little piece of legislation that the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BE-REUTER) and I call two-floods-and-you-are-out-of-the-taxpayers'-pocket so that the Federal Government no longer subsidizes people living where God has repeatedly shown that he does not want them.

The Federal Government should be leading by example, whether protecting the vast Federal resources like Yosemite Park, treating it like a livable community or leading by example by making sure that the post office obeys local land-use laws, zoning codes, and environmental laws.

The California experience is just one more example of why every politician in the year 2000 should have a program to promote livable communities, what the government can do to be a better partner to make our families safe, healthy, and economically secure.

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PERMANENT MOST FAVORED NATION TRADING STATUS FOR CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today I rise because of my concern about granting permanent normal trade relations to China.

Mr. Speaker, there are good people on both sides of this issue and as we consider granting China MFN; we need to be honest in our debate. Yesterday, the New York Times had an article written by Joseph Kahn with the headline, "Executives Make Trade With